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WORLD NEWS

by Addie Haughey, Sarah Melikian & Marcel De Armas*

AFRICA

The South African government recently announced legislation that will end canned hunting, the practice of breeding animals in captivity and then releasing them into an enclosed area to be hunted, virtually guaranteeing a successful hunt.¹ Over 50,000 animals were hunted by nearly 7,000 tourists in the 2003–04 season.² In South Africa, the industry generates an estimated half a billion dollars annually.³ While environmentalists allege the legislation does not do enough, breeders say the law will destroy the hunting industry and they will be forced to slaughter many of the 5,000 captive lions in South Africa, as they can't afford to feed the lions and there is not enough room for them in the wild.⁴

The South African Environment Minister Marthinus van Shalkwyk characterized the legislation as “putting an end, once and for all, to the reprehensible practice of canned hunting.”⁵ The legislation was initially to take effect June 1, 2007, but is now postponed until February 1, 2008.⁶ The new laws require that lions roam free for a minimum of two years before they are hunted, bans hunting from vehicles, and prohibit using a bow and arrow to kill thick skinned animals and big predators.⁷

AMERICAS

U.S. environmental organizations have petitioned the government to raise the status of the loggerhead sea turtle from “threatened” to “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act (“ESA”). The ESA requires National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Marine Fisheries Service to examine the scientific evidence presented by the petitioners and decide if it is compelling enough to take action.⁸ Loggerhead populations in Florida have declined by fifty percent in a decade, and experts cite a barrage of causes for sea turtle declines occurring all over the country.⁹ The turtles get caught in commercial fishing gear, like lines, nets, and dredges, and coastal development impedes on loggerhead breeding grounds.¹⁰ Climate change may also stress turtle populations due to rising sea levels, which can damage beaches and change ocean temperatures, impacting the ratio of male to female hatchlings.¹¹

The Center for Biological Diversity and Oceana are two groups petitioning on behalf of the loggerhead sea turtles that live on the east coast, which are behaviorally and genetically distinct from loggerheads on the west coast, where the Turtle Island Restoration Network is pushing for an ESA status change.¹² The

groups are petitioning simultaneously, though the government could decide on the western and eastern subspecies of loggerhead sea turtles separately.¹³ If the sea turtles ESA listing is heightened to endangered, increased protections of the species and its habitat will be put into place.¹⁴

Representatives of the fishing industry claim that they are taking steps to decrease turtle deaths through their fishing practices, and also argue that many loggerheads are killed off the coasts of other countries, like Mexico, where the ESA will have no impact.¹⁵ Government officials have ninety days from the filing of the petition to make their decision.¹⁶

ASIA

The use of unregulated chemicals in Punjab, India’s most intensively farmed state, are causing health problems, including cancer.¹⁷ According to an environmental report by the small state’s government, the people, water, animals, and agriculture are all afflicted.¹⁸ The report points to sources of the problem, such as improper chemical applications due to disregarding instructions and the success of the agricultural green revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, which increased dependency on fertilizers and pesticides.¹⁹ In Punjab, food grain production has grown almost ten-fold in the last forty years.²⁰ However, growth rates are now slowing, and the report attributes an overall reduction in the soil’s fertility and soil erosion to the overuse of nitrogenous fertilizers.²¹

In China, a different kind of toxin is causing health and environmental problems: used electronics sent to China for dismantling.²² Skin rashes and respiratory problems are blamed on chemicals like mercury, barium, and cobalt that are either in the waste or used in processing the waste.²³ The environmental group Basel Action Network reports that in one e-waste town, the lead in the river sediment is double European safety levels.²⁴ According to Greenpeace in Beijing, China produces more than a million tons of e-waste each year, including five million television sets, five million computers, and ten million cell phones.²⁵ Although many U.S. states require that disposed electronics be sent to recycling centers, because Congress has yet to ratify the Basel Convention, those recycling centers can send their waste abroad.²⁶ However, while most of the Chinese e-waste is imported, domestic e-waste is on the rise.²⁷

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EUROPE

With concerns over declining fish stocks environmentalists, fishermen, and politicians are realizing and seeking out the benefits of marine reserves.²⁸ Surprisingly, fishermen, such as those from the Northwestern Spanish town of Lira, are requesting marine reserves in order to protect their livelihood.²⁹

Marine reserves usually set aside a part of the ocean and prohibit fishing for all or part of the year, in order to allow a sanctuary for fish to grow, reproduce, and spill over into areas where fishing is allowed.³⁰ Marine reserves in other parts of the globe have proven successful in recovering strained fisheries. For example, in St. Lucia and Florida, marine reserves have increased adjacent fish catches by fifty percent, while a reserve in Sicily, Italy increased the fish catch “by a factor of 27 in only five years.”³¹

POLAR REGIONS

A team of scientists monitoring the Arctic Ocean’s circulation detected a change in the circulation from 2002 to 2006.³² The Arctic Ocean’s circulation reverted to the clockwise pattern exhibited prior to 1990, from the counterclockwise pattern that dominated the 1990s.³³ This finding suggests that some of the recent dramatic changes in the Arctic’s climate are not solely caused by climate change.³⁴

The scientists attributed the change in circulation to “weakened Arctic Oscillation, a major atmospheric circulation pattern in the northern hemisphere.”³⁵ Prior to 1970, the Arctic Oscilla-

tion was reasonably stable, and since then it has varied approximately on a ten year scale.³⁶ This variation seemed to have ended in the late 1990s, a time when the Arctic environment noticeably changed.³⁷ However, the recent reversal may be short lived as the scientists predict the Arctic Ocean is ready to swing back the circulation pattern of the 1990s.³⁸ While the shifts in the Arctic Ocean’s circulation do not appear to be directly connected to climate change, “the events of the 1990s may well be a preview of how the Arctic will respond over longer periods of time in a warming world.”³⁹

SOUTH PACIFIC

The ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (“ASEAN”) came together at its thirteenth ASEAN Summit in Singapore, joined by six other Asian countries, including China and Japan.⁴⁰ While the crisis in Myanmar and the passage of an ASEAN legal charter topped the summit agenda, climate change was also addressed by a pact that sets the stage for a series of UN meetings on climate change to begin in December.⁴¹ While the pact fell short of setting numerical goals for emission cuts due to objection from poorer Asian countries, Australia’s Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said “there has been a turning of the tide in China and India’s position—they’re saying ‘yes, we need to do something to stabilize emissions.’”⁴²

Despite the lack of clear numbers on emissions in the pact, Japan did offer \$1.8 billion in loans to fund environmental projects in Asia, and the group pledged to plant 37.5 million acres of trees by 2020.⁴³



Endnotes: World News

¹ See Green.view, *Animal Rights in South Africa*, ECONOMIST.COM (Apr. 16, 2007), available at http://www.economist.com/research/articlesbysubject/displaystory.cfm?subjectid=7933604&story_id=9023987 (last visited Nov. 23, 2007); see also Bonnie Tsui, *Trophies in a Barrel: Examining ‘Canned Hunting,’* N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 9, 2006, available at <http://travel2.nytimes.com/2006/04/09/travel/09heads.html> (last visited Nov. 23, 2007).

² Tsui, *id.*

³ Sarah McGreggor, *South Africa Moves to Limit Lion Hunts*, NEWS.COM.AU (Feb. 19, 2007), available at <http://www.news.com.au/travel/story/0,23483,21262138-27977,00.html> (last visited Nov. 23, 2007).

⁴ Anthony Sguazzin, *Hunting Lions Bred in Captivity May Soon Cost More Than \$35,000*, BLOOMBERG (Nov. 7, 2007), available at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601088&sid=asYPMpYDrS90&refer=home> (last visited Nov. 23, 2007).

⁵ Sguazzin, *id.*

⁶ Sguazzin, *id.*

⁷ MSNBC.com, *South Africa Approves New Lion Hunting Laws* (Feb. 20, 2007), available at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17241401/> (last visited Nov. 23, 2007).

⁸ Environmental News Network, *Conservation Groups Act to Protect Loggerhead Sea Turtle* (Nov. 15, 2007), available at <http://www.enn.com/wildlife/article/25121> (last visited Nov. 23, 2007).

⁹ Environmental News Network, *id.*

¹⁰ Environmental News Network, *id.*

¹¹ David Briscoe, *Feds Take Step Toward Protecting Turtles*, WASH. POST, Nov. 17, 2007, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/17/AR2007111700470.html>.

¹² Environmental News Network, *supra* note 8; Briscoe, *supra* note 11.

¹³ Briscoe, *supra* note 11.

¹⁴ Environmental News Network, *supra* note 8.

¹⁵ Briscoe, *supra* note 11.

¹⁶ Environmental News Network, *supra* note 8.

¹⁷ Green.view, *Chemical Generation*, ECONOMIST.COM (Sept. 24, 2007), available at http://www.economist.com/research/articlesbysubject/displaystory.cfm?subjectid=7933604&story_id=9856023 (last visited Nov. 23, 2007) [hereinafter *Chemical Generation*].

¹⁸ *Chemical Generation*, *id.*

¹⁹ *Chemical Generation*, *id.*

²⁰ *Chemical Generation*, *id.*

²¹ *Chemical Generation*, *supra* note 17.

²² Christopher Bodeen, *In ‘e-waste’ Heartland, a Toxic China, Toxic Electronics*, INT’L HERALD TRIB. (Nov. 18, 2007), available at <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/11/18/asia/waste.php> (last visited Nov. 23, 2007).

²³ Bodeen, *id.*

²⁴ Bodeen, *id.*

²⁵ Bodeen, *id.*